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Contesting Discourses and Challenged Gender Roles in the Financial Sector

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Contesting discourses and challenged gender roles in the financial sector.

This paper is a study of gender and discourse in an organization within the financial sector which calls for more female top managers. Although we may perceive studies within gender and discourse to be one-sided and too generalizing because they often interpret differences between men and women in relation to the dominance of men in a patriarchal order, the traditional gender segregation seems to be deep-rooted in society and organizations as a perception which influences the interactions of its members. In the particular social organization in question, the gender roles seem to be challenged, but, to some extent, the 'dominant patriarchal discourse prevails' (van Dijk 2008: 157). The paper contributes to a new understanding of the importance of position in relation to gender and discourse and the impact of gendered discursive constructions on the perceptions of career opportunities for male and female employees in a bank setting. The analysis is carried out on six sets of data from focus group interviews among future bank managers and top managers with a focus on the discursive constructions of gendered identities, group relationships, negotiation for agreement as well as on the impact of contesting discourses performed in a mixed focus group interview with top managers. The analysis is carried out from a politeness and face approach, in the sense of signs of involvement and independence (Scollon and Wong-Scollon 2001) and pays attention to the use of tag questions, signs of agreement and approval, signs of cooperation, references to statements put forward by others and signs of doubt and uncertainty.

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